

The single reference to exceptional criminal activity in the board minutes discovered in the course of this search was a motion put forward by an alderman in July 1895, over three years prior to the disturbance, to create a Police Board to investigate robberies and devise means of capturing perpetrators. At their December 1898 meeting, the new board received a report about arrests during the violence of the previous month. Eighty-three arrests were made (almost equally split by race, 42 white and 41 black), with most charges (60) for drunk and disorderly, six for larceny, three for throwing rocks, and four for firing a pistol in the city. Other charges went unspecified.

The New Hanover Circuit Criminal Court Minute Docket sheds more light on criminal activity in Wilmington during this period. Abstracted in the course of this research were the charges brought to that court during its quarterly meetings for the period 1896-1898 (see Appendix). Any charges brought as a consequence of the November 10 violence do not appear in the table since the court's final meeting for the year 1898 took place in October. These court records indicate that larcenies and related charges dominated the docket and increased slightly in 1898 from the previous year. Assault and battery charges stayed about the same. There were five murder trials in 1898 as opposed to six in 1897. No rape charges were heard in this court in 1898 (there were three the previous year).

In conclusion, available evidence indicates that the crime rate, particularly larcenies and assaults, underwent a slight increase in the months preceding November 1898. The available documentation, however, does not indicate that the activity was of the crisis proportions as described in the press. It seems clear that the situation exploited for partisan political advantage.

Destruction

In the sources consulted, there is general agreement that wholesale destruction was limited to Free Love Hall, the building which housed the *Wilmington Record*. That structure, of course, was burned but fire companies saved the buildings on adjacent lots. James Sprunt, by all accounts, rushed to his cotton compress to save his business and to assure his employees that he would safeguard their homes. Many of those who led the attack on Manly's office, in the hours that followed, engaged in violent attacks on individuals and on property but the record indicates the complete destruction of few other buildings. In particular a dance hall and Manhattan Park in the black section of the city are said to have been wrecked. In the search for weapons, private homes, churches, and businesses were entered and ransacked; in some cases, axes were used to force entry. Many blacks who had not fled town in the days preceding November 10 did so in the face of this immediate threat. Consequently, it is a safe assumption (not to say, an understatement) to assert that businesses in the black community suffered setbacks.